

Authenticity Issues of Social Media: Credibility, Quality and Reality

Shahrinaz Ismail and Roslina Abdul Latif

Abstract—Social media has led to paradigm shifts in ways people work and do business, interact and socialize, learn and obtain knowledge. So much so that social media has established itself as an important spatial extension of this nation's historicity and challenges. Regardless of the enabling reputation and recommendation features through social networks embedded in the social media system, the overflow of broadcasted and publicized media contents turns the table around from engendering trust to doubting the trust system. When the trust is at doubt, the effects include deactivation of accounts and creation of multiple profiles, which lead to the overflow of 'ghost' contents (i.e. "the abundance of abandoned ships"). In most literature, the study of trust can be related to culture; hence the difference between Western's "openness" and Eastern's "blue-chip" concepts in networking and relationships. From a survey on issues and challenges among Malaysian social media users, 'authenticity' emerges as one of the main factors that causes and is caused by other factors. The other issue that has surfaced is credibility either in terms of message/content and source. Another is the quality of the knowledge that is shared. This paper explores the terrains of this critical space which in recent years has been dominated increasingly by, arguably, social networks embedded in the social media system, the overflow of broadcasted and publicized media content.

Keywords—Authenticity, credibility, knowledge quality and social media.

I. INTRODUCTION

SOcial media has led to paradigm shifts in ways people work and do business, interact and socialize, learn and obtain knowledge. So much so that social media has established itself as an important spatial extension of this nation's historicity and challenges.

This paper explores the terrains of this critical space which in recent years has been dominated increasingly by, arguably, social networks embedded in the social media system, the overflow of broadcasted and publicized media content.

Social networking sites have reached unfrequented heights in recent years; such public interactive system, where "system" is understood as a constellation of multiple artefacts that provide arenas of experience to which the tracheotomy of user, spectator and system can be brought to bear as a tool of analysis [1].

Social networking sites have also transformed society on both the micro and macro level by enabling perpetual

communication. On the micro level, individuals are able to keep track of their friends and family on a daily basis. People can upload pictures, offer commentary on a topic of their choice or voyeuristically view the activities of others. With a single click, a person can receive organized updates on a friend who is on the other side of the world. On the macro level, social media has enabled mass gatherings, helped to organize strikes and facilitate revolutions around the world [2].

Given the present scenario, even Google saw the need to change its policies and principles. As of March this year (2012), changes were made to explain to the general user how to share information, how to communicate effectively with other people and/or how to create new content. It further explicates how Google will use that information and the ways in which we can protect our privacy. The privacy policy clarifies [3]:

- What information Google collects and why they collect it
- How they use the information
- The choices they offer, including how to access and update information.

Delving into this new development, we explored the role of recommender traits in terms of credibility of the authors of the content (in terms of sharing), quality of the knowledge shared (information shared) and the discontinuity of media content, under the larger framework of authenticity as an issue in social media. Authenticity issues are the dependent variable for this research, which is further broken down into three separate independent variables as in credibility of the authors, quality of knowledge shared and discontinuity of media content. Trust and authenticity is very important when sharing information online as all of us are bound by a code of conduct by our profession which extrapolates out to all areas of communication including social media [4].

We present the results of a web-experiment that shows the strength of different social media networks (Facebook, Friendster, MySpace, Hi5, etc.), Microblogs (Twitter, Plurk, etc.), Blog (Blogger, Wordpress, LiveJournal, etc.) and Multimedia Share (YouTube, Flickr, etc.) in ASEAN countries, at least the ones that answered our survey research.

Our findings suggest that credibility of the authors is positively associated with the authenticity issue of social media. Paradoxically, our findings also suggest that quality of the knowledge share and discontinuity of the media content is positively associated with the authenticity issue of social media.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview of Social Media Studies

There has been a growing body of research into the adoption and use of social software especially in the study of blogs, micro blogs, wikis, shared bookmarks, shared files and social network sites, adding earlier studies of email and its usage. However, there is much less known about how these technologies are adopted and used by different groups in general and by communities in particular [5]. Their research also tried to determine different types of communities that differ in their human capital – number of people and participation rate, intellectual capital – what they share with each other and which social software tools they use in sharing and relational capital – the relative contribution made by people and connections they make through the tools. This is an important outlook towards this research as it gives an idea of what the communities of social media groups are made of.

Other researchers have identified many characteristics of social networks that can support creative collaboration. These networks provide members with control over content and timing, ease of communication over a wide geographical area and the possibility of engaging with a diverse group of people with minimal cost, effort and risks [1]. These characteristics will eventually determine how people interact via social media and the diversity of its users.

In another research [6] examines the impact of new technologies on public relations. The researchers found the phenomenon of blogging and other aspects of the social media have the potential to bring dramatic changes to public relations. They claimed the development of various new technologies has significantly empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by giving them a dynamic new media which many are using to communicate effectively with a variety of internal and external audiences.

It is the same impact that clearly shows in the biasness in selecting and processing news content in social media [7]. Their findings suggest that indeed homophily is a powerful force that drives the stories to which social media websites exposes us to and what we choose to read. In addition to that, their findings also suggest that the racial and socioeconomic diversity of our social networks can impact policy preferences, by virtue of the fact that the story's recommender can affect both the importance we place on an article and our political attitudes related to the article's content.

B. Authenticity Issues over Social Media

Regardless of the diverse researches conducted on social media, there are a very limited number of studies that empirically examine how people develop their perception of information credibility towards information posted to online review sites and the consequences.

Previous studies demonstrate disagreement among researches regarding the credibility of online information and its impact on sales or behaviour [8]. The results of this study imply the presence of source identity in an online review that can enhance the perceived credibility of the review, which

eventually will affect the persuasiveness of the online review and lead to consumer's initial trust development in the travel services being reviewed. For that reason, it is desirable that the administrators of the travel-related review sites or online recommendation-type social media sites design their websites that makes source identity of the information posted on the websites available for their visitors or perhaps encouraged for reviewers [8].

Some authors propose that "online information is higher in credibility than information from other more traditional media" [9] because of the posted information by experienced people (e.g. experienced travellers as in travel sites) who are "considered as credible sources of information" [10]. On the other hand, others argue that online information can be "posted by any individual and therefore is less credible than other types of information sources" [11, 12, 13, 14]. These statements were pointed out by Kusumasondjaja et al. [8] in his feat conceptualising the framework on credibility issues in online review sites.

In another research done by Jacoby et al., [15], looks at individuals that attempt to reduce uncertainty by finding credible information that can be used for decision making. One of the aspects suggested to influence perceived credibility is message of information quality [16].

Sussman and Seigal [17] however, managed to identify two reasons why source identity plays a crucial role in online communications: firstly, information exchange and acquisition will be more efficient when the identity of the information source is disclosed; and secondly, source identity enhances source credibility, which then leads to information credibility and usefulness.

Trust has also been central to investigation into the use of online social networks. Mayer et al [18] defines trust as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.

The Internet is an environment full of uncertainty and various types of players, and an online user always experiences some level of risk. Thus, trust has become the strategy for dealing with uncertain outcomes or future and it is considered one of the most reliable predictor for online behaviours [19].

In a research conducted by Shi and Yu [20], they achieve results that indicated trust can effectively mitigate a user's privacy concern and should be considered a more dominant factor in determining both information disclosure and the intensity of social network services usage.

The assessment of credibility in the online environment is often much complex than in previous media contexts due to "the multiplicity of sources embedded in the numerous layers of online dissemination of content" [21]. Credibility has been discussed in the three perspectives of communication: medium credibility, message/content credibility and source credibility [22]. Medium credibility is the perceived level of credibility that individual users have of a specific medium, such as

newspapers, television, the Internet or blogs. Message/content credibility is the perceived credibility of the communicated message itself, such as information quality, accuracy or currency. Past research and source credibility has focused on the expertise or trustworthiness of the sources as the likelihood to provide credible information [22].

According to Rimal [23], most of these innovations have positive and negative sides to them and social network is no exception. However a primary concern with social media is the sheer volume of information that is generated with little or no oversight.

In the aspect of quality of the knowledge shared, Messing and Westwood [7] suggest that aggregate social endorsements dramatically affect selection rates and can serve to reduce selective exposure based on partisanship, but this body of work does not address the effects of recommendations from an individual within the user's social network, which is a fundamental element of social media. We address this gap by exploring the role of recommender traits on content selection and processing.

Even in universities, guidelines on social media principles and engagement are clearly stated to individuals who participate in social media on behalf of the university (e.g. California State University), which include the basic principle of being "responsible for continuous monitoring, maintenance, and timely response" [24]. The university even makes the individual admit their mistake and be upfront and quick with their corrections, if the situation of miscommunication online occurs [24]. This is to ensure the quality of knowledge shared and the credibility of the authors as well as the university they are representing is valid.

Discontinuity of media content for this research project looks at several main aspects such as the continuity of authentic media content; media content with high recommendation by public and social media content that should have continuous responses from public to prove that it is reliable. Due to its nature of supporting transparency and open communication, social media is perceived to be for marketing only, especially for most banks and financial institutions [25]. Despite having many banks in the Asia region launching their social media presence, "the discussion whether social media can be a full-fledged new channel has been answered positively only by a small number, while most banks see it as a customer engagement tool for customer education, complaint and query management, and customer needs analysis" [25]. On top of that, there is speculation that "ranking increased competition, leading some users to be more active in order to improve their rank" [26]. This brings out the reason for avoiding discontinuity of social media content to ensure customer engagement and being on top of the rank list.

Previous works have lack of studies on discontinuity of media content. The closest to discontinuity of media content found in literature is from the reverse perspective, which is on diffusion discontinuity, where the role of content or the content itself "impacts diffusion through its effects on word-of-mouth transmission" [27]. Regardless of the purpose of this previous work, the conclusion that can be derived from it

is in terms of further justifying why user-generated content (i.e. media content) should not be discontinued without having any reason or backup plan. Apart from losing the readers engagement, a discontinued content would cause worse impact on the diffusion and the 'reachability' of the content to the 'right audience', and further affects the main purpose of having the content in the first place, which could be for sharing knowledge expertise.

III. METHODOLOGY: FROM FRAMEWORK TO SURVEY

An exploratory survey was conducted over short interviews with an expert from a government ministry and an academician from a research university in Malaysia, who had an overview of social media trends in ASEAN countries in general and in Malaysia specifically. From the experts' perspectives, the media development industry has identified three domains which are the main contributors of authenticity issues of social media.

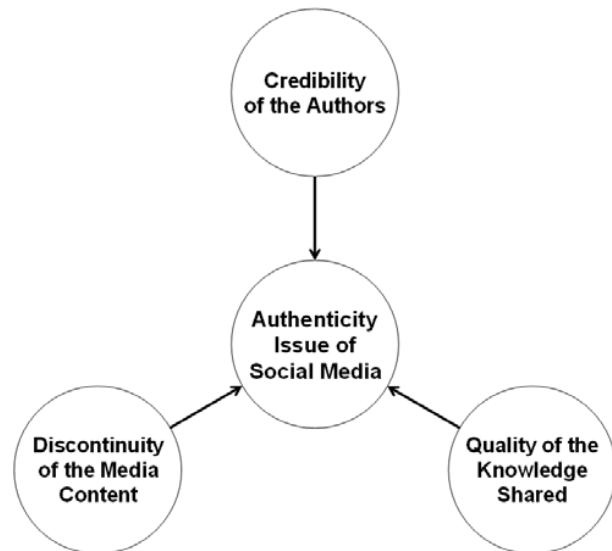


Fig. 1 Social Media Authenticity Issues

These domains are the credibility of the authors of social media contents, the quality of the knowledge shared over social media and the discontinuity of the media content. Together, they form a framework with the domains as independent variables and the authenticity issues is the dependent variable, as shown in Fig. 1.

A. Settings and Participants

A questionnaire was designed based on the constructs defined according to the variables shown in Fig. 1. Nine constructs were designed for the three independent variables (i.e. credibility of the authors, quality of the knowledge shared, and discontinuity of the media content), whereas eight constructs were designed for the dependent variable (i.e. authenticity issue of social media). The constructs appeared as statements in the questionnaire, where the respondents were asked to agree on using the 5-Likert scale (i.e. 1 for "strongly

disagree”, 2 for “disagree”, 3 for “neutral”, 4 for “agree”, and 5 for “strongly agree”). Among a few samples of statements that are used as constructs are as follows:

- AC3: The authors who share information online are credible because my friends recommend them.
- AC6: I need to check the background of the author before I can accept what I read/view in the article.
- KQ3: It is important to me that the knowledge shared on social media is usable and reliable.
- KQ5: I only trust online information if there is quality and knowledge in the message shared.
- CD2: Authentic media content will not close down or be discontinued.
- CD8: Social media content should have continuous responses from public to prove that it is reliable.
- AI6: Nobody can assess the quality of media content even with a lot of recommendations from public/experts.
- AI8: True credible authors may be demotivated from continuing their knowledge sharing online.

The questionnaire survey was conducted within a month, via online distribution over social media, targeted at social media active users in Malaysia. In order to verify that the respondents are eligible to answer the questionnaires, they are

required to answer some questions on their experience in using social media. This is based on the most popular social media according to categories of social network (e.g. Facebook, Friendster, MySpace, Hi5), microblog (e.g. Twitter, Plurk, Tumblr), blog (e.g. Blogger, Wordpress, LiveJournal) and multimedia sharing (e.g. YouTube, Flickr, Scribd), and in terms of respondents having the account and being active users of those accounts.

Fig. 2 shows the percentage of respondents’ experience in social media in percentage, relative to the top social media (i.e. Facebook as 100%), since almost everyone admits having an account there. Overall, the active usage of social media are never as hundred-percent as having an account, even for Facebook (i.e. only 98.88% of registered users are actively using the social media), and this ranges to 0 percent (0%) for Plurk.

In terms of years of experience in using social media, the majority of the respondents have more than 6 years’ experience in using social media (42.7%), followed by a range between 3 to 6 years of experience (41.6%) and between 1 to 3 years experience (13.5%), leaving the rest having less than 1 year experience (2.2%) dwelling in the social media scene.

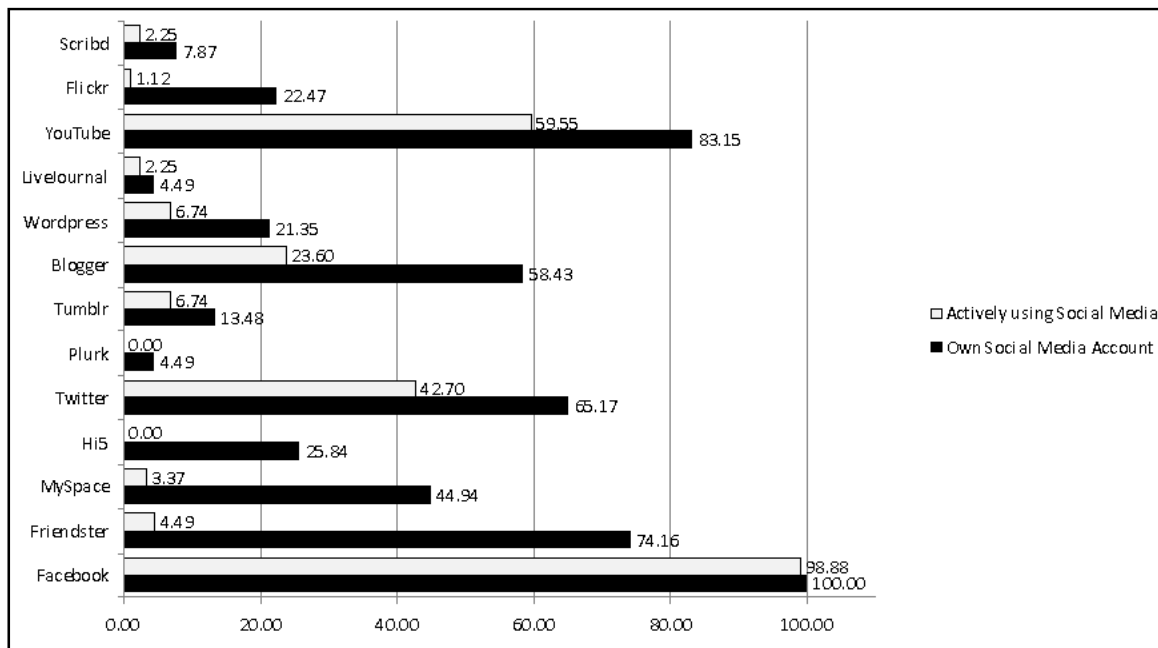


Fig. 2 Respondents’ Usage of Social Media (Percentage)

B. Reliability and Validity of Questionnaire Design

A set of simple tests were conducted on the questionnaire design and data using SPSS, mainly on the constructs used to validate the framework, to further support the reliability and the validity of the survey results.

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire design are shown in Table I, with Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient

measuring the internal consistency. It looks at how a set of items are closely related as a group, with the values accepted for Cronbach’s alpha (α) in this study are to be above 0.6 up to 1.0 ($\alpha > 0.6$), following the rules of thumb: $\alpha > 0.9$ is excellent, $\alpha > 0.8$ is good, $\alpha > 0.7$ is acceptable, $\alpha > 0.6$ is questionable, $\alpha > 0.5$ is poor, and $\alpha < 0.5$ is unacceptable.

TABLE I
RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN (N = 98)

Variables	Reliability (α , No. of Items)	Validity (n, %)
Authenticity issue of social media	0.816, 6	88, 98.9%
Credibility of the authors	0.737, 9	86, 96.6%
Quality of the knowledge shared	0.659, 7	86, 96.6%
Discontinuity of media content	0.790, 9	87, 97.8%

For the sets of data with low value for Cronbach’s alpha, the reliability test was done repetitively to get an acceptable value by removing suggested items for each analysis cycle, which results in the number of items to be 2 items less than the actual number of constructs, for the case of the dependent variable (i.e. authenticity issues of social media) and one of the independent variables (i.e. quality of the knowledge shared).

This test is supported by factor analysis to check on the sampling size, which should be ample for further exploration and analysis, shown under validity column with *n* as the number of accepted number of data.

IV. FINDINGS: VALIDATING THE FRAMEWORK

In order to validate the authenticity framework, the collected data from the questionnaire survey was analysed using multiple regression method in SPSS, where the value of Pearson correlation coefficient (*r*) is generated to examine and interpret the degree of relationship between the three model constructs and the main dependent variable. Positive value shows a positive relationship, whereas negative value shows a negative relationship between the variables.

Fig. 3 shows the existence of correlations or statistical relations between the variables, such that systematic changes in the value of one variable are accompanied by systematic changes in the other. The correlations values are at high significance level, especially between authenticity and discontinuity (i.e. significance level < 0.005). The correlations values in general are quite low but still exist between the variables: $r(\text{Credibility, Authenticity}) = +0.242$; $r(\text{Quality, Authenticity}) = +0.197$; and $r(\text{Discontinuity, Authenticity}) = +0.372$.

Correlations

		Authenticity	Credibility	Quality	Discontinuity
Pearson Correlation	Authenticity	1.000	.242	.197	.372
	Credibility	.242	1.000	.466	.503
	Quality	.197	.466	1.000	.492
	Discontinuity	.372	.503	.492	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Authenticity	.	.011	.032	.000
	Credibility	.011	.	.000	.000
	Quality	.032	.000	.	.000
	Discontinuity	.000	.000	.000	.
N	Authenticity	89	89	89	89
	Credibility	89	89	89	89
	Quality	89	89	89	89
	Discontinuity	89	89	89	89

Fig. 3 Correlations between the three independent variables and the dependent variable

Model summary table in SPSS explains the goodness of fit of model. As shown in Fig. 4, R square = 0.143 means that

14.3 percent (14.3%) of variation is explained by the model. The adjusted R square adjusts for the number of explanatory terms (i.e. independent variables) in a model.

Model Summary^a

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.378 ^a	.143	.112	3.934	.143	4.713	3	85	.004

a. Predictors: (Constant), Discontinuity, Quality, Credibility

b. Dependent Variable: Authenticity

Fig. 4 Model summary for the three independent variables and the dependent variable

The goodness of fit of the model can be further improved by increasing the significance level between the variables. It is found that if the relationship between the three independent variables is restructured, the significance levels can be improved. In order to restructure the model, the three independent variables are reanalysed, but this time the discontinuity is treated as the dependent variable (and the authenticity is not included).

Correlations

		Discontinuity	Credibility	Quality
Pearson Correlation	Discontinuity	1.000	.503	.492
	Credibility	.503	1.000	.466
	Quality	.492	.466	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Discontinuity	.	.000	.000
	Credibility	.000	.	.000
	Quality	.000	.000	.
N	Discontinuity	89	89	89
	Credibility	89	89	89
	Quality	89	89	89

Fig. 5 Correlations between the restructured three independent variables

Compared to the correlations table in Fig. 3, Fig. 5 shows the changes when the variables are restructured in such a way that the credibility and quality become the ‘independent variables’ and discontinuity becomes the ‘dependent variable’. (Authenticity is put aside temporarily to look into this restructured section.) The result shows that all correlations values are at high significance level (i.e. significance level < 0.005), and the correlations values also increase: $r(\text{Credibility, Discontinuity}) = +0.503$; and $r(\text{Quality, Discontinuity}) = +0.492$.

Model Summary^a

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.581 ^a	.338	.322	3.923	.338	21.915	2	86	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Quality, Credibility

b. Dependent Variable: Discontinuity

Fig. 6 Model summary for the restructured two ‘independent variables’ and the ‘dependent variable’

The model summary generated during this analysis (shown in Fig. 6) also shows a higher value of R square (0.338). This means that 33.8 percent (33.8%) of variation is explained by

the model, proving that the restructure of the variables results in a better fit of the model.

From the results retrieved on the significant correlations values, the original authenticity model is restructured as shown in Fig. 7.

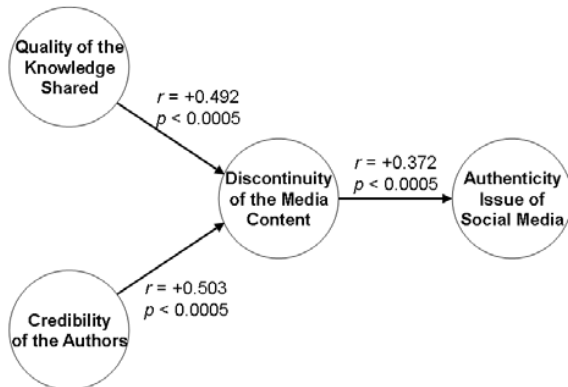


Fig. 7 Social Media Authenticity Issue New Framework

The new framework (as shown in Fig. 7) proves that the credibility of the authors and quality of the knowledge shared are the factors that affect the discontinuity of the media content, and these relationships affect the authenticity issue of social media as a whole.

V. DISCUSSIONS: THE MEANING BEHIND THE FRAMEWORK

Our model shows the significance of discontinuity of the media content in affecting authenticity issue of social media, yet there is a huge gap in academic research on discontinuity of media contents, especially in relating this factor with authenticity issue. Most articles found are by social media experts, who are more into practicality of the knowledge via experience and their belief in sharing knowledge over social media instead of having their thoughts being documented and published as academic research.

As presented in Fig. 7, credibility of the authors and quality of the knowledge shared are the factors that affect the issue of discontinuity of media content. The discontinuity of media content will increase the possibility of authenticity issue of social media, among the Malaysian users. The variance of each relationship is quite high, which is above 37 percent (37%), but not as significant as the preferred 60 percent (60%) mark and above.

From the high percentage of discontinuity of the media contents, it is understood that a constantly updated profile, page or any social media interface, was expected from the social media users. Discontinuity of the media contents bring more doubt to the users, or even uncommon visitors, compared to lack of quality on the knowledge or information shared in the media or even to the credibility of the authors who contribute to the media contents.

Media contents are more obviously and explicitly presented or portrayed compared to knowledge quality and author's credibility, since the only part of the interface that a user can

glimpse quickly to check is the date and time stamp. Other factors require more attention to the details and more understanding on what is presented and shared for the users to assume or summarise that the author is credible and sharing knowledge of some quality to them. These answer the reason behind the low strength of the factors being the contributors to the authenticity issue.

Since the majority of social media users who participated in the questionnaire survey are active users of Facebook (98.88%) and YouTube (59.55%), and the access to YouTube is highly related to the share of the YouTube videos in Facebook page, there is a possibility that users are not aware of authenticity issues since the knowledge shared are friends and people they know and are considered credible to them.

On the other hand, users who use social media beyond personal needs of keeping in touch with known friends and family members would use social media to 'reach' knowledge experts of certain fields they are interested in, and to this group of users, the credibility of the authors and quality of knowledge shared would be serious factors contributing to the authenticity issues of social media.

VI. DISCUSSIONS: HANDLING THE AUTHENTICITY ISSUES

On top of further validating the social media authenticity issues framework, there are three possible solutions identified as the challenges imposed by the authenticity issues. Each of these challenges is the answer to the three domains mentioned in the authenticity issues framework.

The credibility of the authors, for example, would impose a challenge in being "spotted on" and keeping up with the needs of the social media users of being informed and updated with the topic claimed as the expertise of the authors' (as shown in Fig. 8). For authors who depend on social media users to be credible in the knowledge expertise they shared over the media, the need to be "spotted on" would include being recognised and recommended by the audience. With good ratings and recommendations, the authors can reach the required credibility to be acknowledged as the experts in their field. Hence, the issue of trust does play a significant role in credibility; if the users trust the source therefore they believe that the knowledge shared is credible.

'Fostering trust through the shared content' is defined as a challenge in solving the authenticity issue of knowledge quality being shared over the social media. As mentioned by many researchers in the field of knowledge sharing, the element of trust should exist amongst the community of practice where the knowledge is being collected, transferred, analysed and shared. Looking into the context of social media authenticity, trust should be fostered through the shared content in order to assure the readers or audience of the quality of the knowledge being shared or presented.

Seeing the potential of social media as a collective 'voice' of agreement, where users and friends within the network have the power to recommend good media contents amongst them, and also based on trust amongst them they believe that the contents shared by any of the members would be of some quality according to the recommendation and comments by

the members who share and spread the contents, there is a possibility that social media can 'enable' trust to be built within and across the networks or communities residing in the Internet.

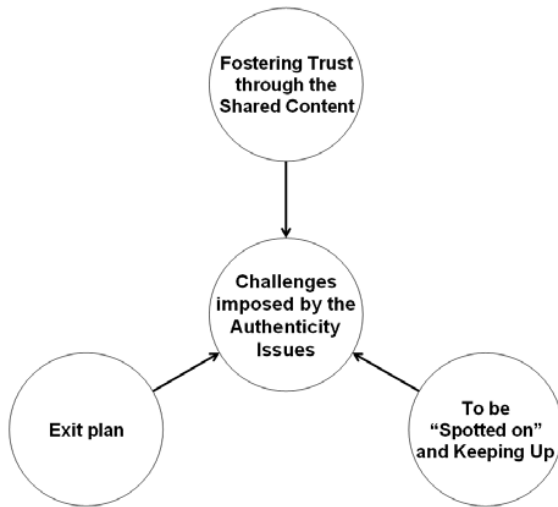


Fig. 8 Challenges Imposed by the Social Media Authenticity Issues

We strongly feel that a proper exit plan is needed to overcome the issue of discontinuity of media content, and this is also considered as a challenge due to some reasons. It is easy to create a new interface or profile to share new knowledge content, but how long can that content be sustained and relevant on the Internet, and to whom? Some authors feel the need to create a new interface for work management purposes, for example, and after some time the content is seen irrelevant to be continued especially for short-termed work, regardless of the need to archive the shared contents or not.

The challenge seen in this is the exit plan, especially for ad hoc creators who may think that the content will be used for a long term and will be constantly updated and continued by others in the community drawn by the interface. Ad hoc creators may not realise it until after some time that the content shared would not be always needed by the community, thus deficits the original purpose of creating the interface with far vision. It is not like creating a website for an established company, which would constantly and continuously need the website to be up and running the whole year round. For interfaces or pages that rely on a single author, for example, it is more challenging maintaining than creating them.

Maintaining the pages and keep it relevant throughout the changes in trends is actually not easy or always feasible. If this is the case, then an exit plan should be in the pipeline at all times, especially to ensure that the discontinuity of the media content will not affect the credibility of the authors and the quality of the knowledge shared. As suggested by Asian Banker Research [25], among the critical success factors for social presence, which can be a challenge even for a financial institution, include fast response time to customer inquiries and complaints, being innovative in customer engagement,

having sufficient time and resources allocated to social media, and multichannel ability to lead seamless and continuous dialogue with customers. A lesson learnt from an Asian bank usage of social media, Siam Commercial Bank has put in place a well-governed tracking, query and complaint management process, which allows it to reply to every customer within hours, by deploying considerable resources to track and monitor its social media sites round the clock [25].

In closing the loop of social presence, a proper exit plan is indeed a good challenge that authors should look into before engaging new social media interface to be the platform to share the thoughts and knowledge.

VII. CONCLUSION

A. Significant Findings

As Messing and Westwood [7] found out, social media has shaped the modern media's landscape in two ways. First, websites like Facebook serve to aggregate content from many different news providers into a single location. When a Facebook user recommends a story, the recommendation appears in many of the user's friends Facebook News Feed, which is shown by default after navigating to Facebook.com. This is also true for this research as the findings clearly indicates the highest rate of usage which is 100 percent.

Social media therefore enables users to identify news from a wide range of sources deemed by friends to be interesting and important. This represents a fundamental departure from the way in which news readers typically read content: users no longer first select a content source. Instead, the select the story itself – and we argue that part of this choice must be informed by evaluations of the recommender, which in this case are friends they trust. Second, these recommendations can also appear to the user on the story's originating website.

In other words, when a user visits the Star's website for example, the user will see the content that her friends have recommended. Even traditional sources like The Star, The New Straits Times and other online news portals embed stories recommended by each user's Facebook friends. This no doubt enhances the ability of individuals to select socially relevant content when presented with an overwhelming number of news stories from which to choose from.

Although previous studies were not entirely adequate in explaining the impact of media contents in social networks circles, it is obvious that this research contributes to the literature by confirming that media content is more overtly presented or portrayed compared to knowledge quality and author's credibility as it is based on 'fostering trust through the shared content' as discovered by [8, 20].

The credibility of the authors on the other hand inflicts a challenge in being "spotted on" and to keep up with the needs and interests of the social media users. Depending on these informed and updated consumers of social media, the topic of interest would be claimed as expertise of the author. This can be further enhanced with good ratings and recommendations as reiterated by Sussman and Seigal [17]. Therefore, social media is about "influencing opinion, not controlling it through

ensorship” [25], and this alone leads to other challenges in maintaining a good reputation publicly through recommendations and acclaimed expertise one would like to be known for.

Lastly, a proper exit plan is indeed a good test and needs to be thought out by authors. They should look into this before engaging new social media crossing point to be the platform to shared thoughts and knowledge.

B. The Other Side of the Coin

As stated previously, this research contributes to the existing literature and proposes some insight into the vast world of social networks. However, there are some limitations to this empirical study that needs to be addressed in order to provide starting points for further research considerations.

First, the nature of the experimental design implemented in this study has some weaknesses that, if overcome would be able to generate conclusions from different ASEAN countries. Second, the sample of study could have been ideal if we could have gotten respondents from all parts of Malaysia but after posting and re-posting on Facebook via snowball sampling, we were getting a small number of respondents only as our networks and resources were limited.

Future investigations should consider expanding this research project to all ASEAN regions as it will enable the researchers to compare the impact of authenticity, credibility and reality in these countries. It would also give a more holistic outlook on the issues and challenges of the potential for social media to strengthen existing social crevasses.

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